Fairyland

Port Phaeton lies open to your gaze, with never a mast or a sail on its placid face. Its barrier reef shows so truly here—a great deep white scar in the emerald and amethyst sea. Where it is broken the foam fumes about the coral and boils in its embrace. In the lagoon this height allows you to see clearly mapped the varying depths at which the corals grow, so that it lies there in the sun, a sheet of translucent water mottled with purple and pink and blue and green. It appears as if one could toss a stone on to the crowded coconuts of the shore, far, far below. And, lifting one's eyes, there is the Pacific at last. It is almost as if one had never seen it before. You know the truth. You know you are infinitesimal on a tiny point of rock that rises, naked and lone, into the infinite vast of sea and sky.

Let me tell you, now, of that reef itself that you see like a white scar from this

height. Here, off Vairao, Teahupoo and the Pan, it is nearly a mile on the average from the shore. Paddle out to it and you realise what it is. Between it and the shore, as you go, you can as a rule see to the bottom at varying depths, the exception being big stretches